

Why the school in its current form cannot remain at Priory Park

As an Education Authority, SCC (Surrey County Council) has a duty to ensure that children have access to education that is safe, accessible, and fit for the future. The consultation proposals which we are asking Cabinet to consider are based on our understanding that the existing site is not able to sustain a 5 Form of Entry (FE) school to modern education standards. Our rationale for this is set out below.

After engagement with the relevant authorities over several years, and with professional judgement, we have concluded that the building and its setting cannot be reasonably adapted to address the deficiency in spaces due to its heritage status and listing.

The heritage designations of the Priory building pose significantly more challenges than most Education developments, and there are numerous other factors that SCC is required to consider, such as pupil place planning (sufficiency), accommodation, including play space provision, health and safety, safeguarding, security, sustainability, inclusion and accessibility.

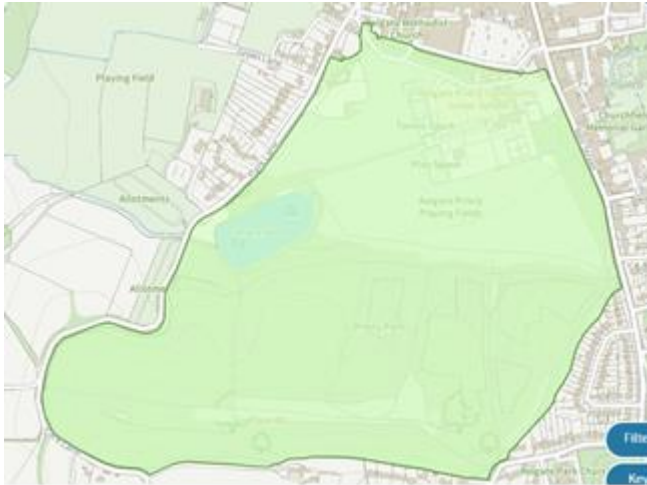
Surrey County Council's position

Heritage / Listing reasons

The constraints of the existing building accommodation, as well as its heritage and listed status, means it is not viable to achieve a modern education environment of the same scale on the current site.

The considerable challenge to re-provide the 600-place Junior school on the existing site is increased due to the heritage status, including the Scheduled Monument, Grade I listed building and assets, all set within a Grade II Registered Park and Garden. All of which make modifications or building work extremely challenging and requires additional planning applications. Due to these designations, applied to preserve buildings which are of exceptional interest (only 2.5% of listed buildings are Grade I) any new proposals would have to meet much stricter design criteria than typical planning applications and be sensitive to the heritage status. In this case, these constraints mean it would be unviable to build a like for like sized school on the existing site. Extensive building work would also result in significant disruption to current pupils through decant processes and temporary accommodation.

All of Reigate Priory Park is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden. See an outline boundary below:

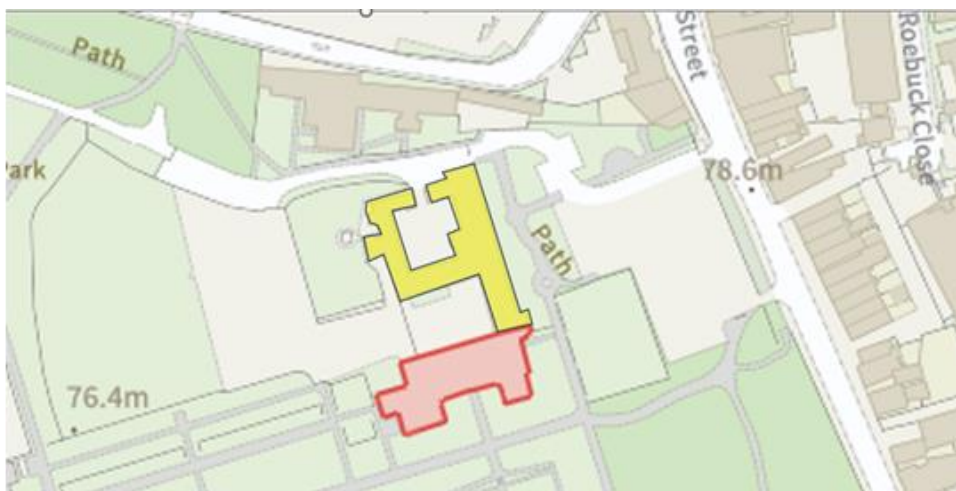


Outline boundary of Grade II Registered Park and Garden

There are a number of individually listed buildings within the Reigate Priory Park and Garden including Reigate Priory School (Grade I), the Gatepiers at the Entrance to Priory Park (Grade II) and the Garden Wall to Reigate Priory (Grade II):

- Reigate Priory – Grade I Listed Building [REIGATE PRIORY, Non Civil Parish - 1188089 | Historic England](#) (see discussion below)
- Gatepiers at Entrance to Priory Park (Grade II) [GATEPIERS AT ENTRANCE TO PRIORY PARK, NEAR NO 7, Non Civil Parish - 1241295 | Historic England](#)
- Garden Wall of Reigate Priory (Grade II) [GARDEN WALL OF REIGATE PRIORY, Non Civil Parish - 1029138 | Historic England](#)
- Priory Lake Cottage (Grade II) [PRIORY LAKE COTTAGE, Non Civil Parish - 1188833 | Historic England](#)

The whole of Reigate Priory (yellow and red shading below) is listed at Grade I and works to the building or within its curtilage (its surroundings), may require listed building consent. The front of the building (shaded red) is registered a Scheduled Monument and works to this part of the building may require Scheduled Monument consent.



The curtilage of Reigate Priory includes any buildings or structures within the wider park and garden constructed before the 1st July 1948. A list of all curtilage listed buildings can be found on Reigate and Banstead Council's website at

https://www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/downloads/file/380/view_the_list_of_buildings_of_architectural_and_historic_interest

The heritage designation also means it is not fully accessible for pupils with additional needs and disabilities as it is not capable of being adequately adapted throughout.

We therefore believe it is not reasonably possible to develop a scheme within the constraints of the existing site (including cost, time and deliverability) which leaves the existing heritage building intact and provides a big enough new building adjacent to the existing building. Further, such a proposal could not reasonably be expected to achieve planning consent.

Current condition

The existing listed building does not provide suitable accommodation for use by a school. There is a significant impact on the day to day running of the school due to several areas where the current building does not meet modern education standards set by the Department for Education (DfE):

- Classrooms sizes are not sufficient.
- The layout of the building has insufficient circulation including single sided corridors.
- The building amenity does not meet current standards in relation to ventilation, heating and acoustics. Energy systems are outdated and costly.
- Insufficient daylighting to teaching spaces, does not meet current standards. Even with substantial upgrades the building would still not meet current standards.
- The existing school kitchen is significantly undersized. It is 25m² and a school of this size should have a 70m² kitchen.
- The adjacent dining hall in the existing school is only 85m² and it should be 150m².
- Minor works such as signage for safeguarding require specific planning permissions and approvals to be applied for and granted, taking valuable staff time away from educational matters.
- Planning permission needed to display external safety signs and banners including those for health and safety purposes.

The age and condition of the building means it is not fully accessible for pupils with additional needs and disabilities. Therefore, there are barriers for the school to be fully inclusive with some children being unable to apply to attend.

As with all schools there is a continuous need to ensure statutory compliance through regular assessment of health and safety and fire safety matters, and mitigate any risks identified in accordance with regulations. However, due to the age and condition of the building it is much more susceptible to such risks and therefore significant additional mitigations, including resources, are needed to meet the Authority's obligations than in comparison with a similar sized school in a more modern building. One example of this being a recent need to urgently decant four classrooms in the Year 6 block into the school Gym Hall and alternative rooms in the main building due to an unexpected health and safety risk caused by deterioration of

interior roofing panels. This caused significant disruption to children and their education.

Furthermore, maintenance costs for Reigate Priory Junior School are **1,108%** more than an equivalent size school, and consequently it is not value for money for the school to stay in the current building.

Whilst the above list is not exhaustive, we are clear that the building and its setting cannot be reasonably adapted to address the deficiency in spaces due to its heritage status and listing.

Public Right of Way

There is a Public Right of Way (PROW) through the school site, which splits the site in two, with buildings on either side. Attempts to have this closed or re-directed have failed. Reigate Priory Junior School previously tried to object to the PROW and have this closed. However, following a Planning Inspectorate review in 2015 of the definitive map modification order 2014 entitled 'The Surrey County Council Footpaths Numbers 632 and 633 (Reigate)' and associated planning permission for the gates (Reigate and Banstead Planning Reference P/08/01064/F), the Order was confirmed, and the school was subsequently required to comply with it and the respective planning conditions to maintain the PROW. While a redesign of the site in its entirety may be able to resolve this issue and divert the right of way outside of a new school boundary it is consider that this is not able to be achieved as set out above.

Safeguarding

The school leaders continuously review and assess risks according to their safeguarding policy in the same way that all schools do. However, Reigate Priory Junior School faces more challenges to ensure children at the school continue to access education in a safe environment.

As with all schools there is a continuous need to ensure statutory compliance through regular assessment of Health & Safety and Fire Safety matters and mitigate any risks identified in accordance with regulations. However, due to the age and condition of the building it is much more susceptible to such risks and therefore significant additional mitigations, including resources, are needed to meet this Duty of Care than in comparison with a similar sized school in a more modern building.

The school uses Priory Park, which is open to the public, as the sports pitches for the school. The school site sits on an area of land within Priory Park, which is used by the public. There is a low perimeter rail around some of the setting which poses potential safeguarding risk where staff supervision is needed to mitigate risks.

Department for Education position

The DfE considered a range of options to redevelop the existing site for five years between 2015 and 2020 in discussion with all relevant authorities including Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and SCC.

The DfE looked in detail at the specific school space requirements for a 5 Form Entry Junior School in relation to both education and administration when developing its proposals and explored several feasibility options to overcome challenges on the

existing site for re-provision of the 5FE (5 Form Entry) (600-place) Junior school to a pre application stage in 2018/19 and further in 2020 based on these requirements.

It was determined that the Priory Building was unsuitable to meeting the modern standards of current teaching practices and that given the heritage constraints, it could not be re-modelled to provide an acceptable school environment. That the challenges of the building could not be overcome to provide a satisfactory level of accommodation. The level of design intervention is not possible or would cause significant harm to the heritage assets.

The 2020 proposal from the DfE relating to the current site which addressed the required school space requirements, was deemed potentially to be inappropriate on heritage terms by Reigate & Banstead Borough Council Planning.

The latest update received from the DfE in December 2023 regarding re-provision of Reigate Priory Junior School, stated:

"We considered options for addressing the condition need at the current Priory Junior School site and our assessment was that planning and heritage requirements and other constraints meant that any development to the site would be challenging. We concluded that even if a deliverable solution were identified, it would be compromised and would not fully meet the school's long-term needs. The new accommodation will give children the best possible accommodation for their education.

To clarify, the DfE explored the hybrid option of complete new build, part new build/ part refurbished, retained, existing solution and concluded that this was not viable for the re-provision of a 5-form-entry (5FE) Junior School. The assessment was that planning and heritage requirements and other constraints meant that any development to the site would be challenging. This conclusion was arrived at following consultation with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council Planning and Conservation Officers, along with Historic England. The DfE scheme required a new 3-storey building to be provided on the site of the current 1950s Year 6 Block. The feedback from Reigate & Banstead Borough Council and Historic England was unequivocal in that a 3-storey building would not be acceptable. This led the DfE to conclude that in order to sustain Reigate Priory Junior School in its current 5FE configuration, re-provision on an alternative site is the best option and that even if a deliverable solution were identified, it would not fully meet the school's long-term needs."

Is there any option to stay on the site?

There may be potential to accommodate Reigate Priory as a smaller school at the existing site, which could form part of the Option 2 scenarios, and it would require some wider reorganisation of school place provision in the Reigate area which would be examined via a working group looking at all reorganisation options.

If reviewing the potential to accommodate a smaller school at the existing Reigate Priory site, as part of any wider reorganisation of school place provision in the Reigate area, the working group would need to fully consider the limitations of the current site from an educational perspective and in line with the wider criteria set out at Annex 1.

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